

1829

A CIRCUMSTANTIAL
A C C O U N T
OF THE
CONDUCT and BEHAVIOUR
OF
Mr. STIRN, &c.

A. C. CROSTHART

A. C. CROSTHART

OF THE

CONDUCT & BEHAVIOUR



OF

MR. STANLEY & CO.

189
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A CIRCUMSTANTIAL
ACCOUNT
OF THE
CONDUCT and BEHAVIOUR
OF

Mr. STIRN,

Now under Confinement for Killing

Mr. MATHEWS.

Wherein several REPORTS already published are contradicted, and an Attempt is made to arrive at his true CHARACTER.

By A. CRAWFORD,

Master of the Academy in Cross-Street, Hatton-Garden.

With whom Mr. Stirn lived Two YEARS as an
ASSISTANT.

“ My Errours, I hope, are only those of CHARITY to
“ Mankind ; and such as my own CHARITY has caused
“ me to commit, that of others may more easily excuse.”

DRYDEN's *Religio Laici*. Preface.

L O N D O N :

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W. Musgrave.





A CIRCUMSTANTIAL

ACCOUNT, &c.

It is certainly a Rule of Morality to represent no Persons worse than they are. The very Dictates of Humanity and Christian Charity would incline a Man rather to err on the favourable, than on the contrary Side.

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The unhappy Affair of Mr. *Stirn* confirms me in this Opinion, since I am morally certain, that had either he or Mr. *Mathews* regulated their Conduct by this Maxim, they would now perhaps have been good Friends, or at least Mr. *Mathews* would have enjoyed his Life and Mr. *Stirn* his Liberty.

But whether it be owing to Custom or Principle, it is too evident that People in general are fond of blackening the Character of a Person in Misfortunes, and because he has been guilty of one atrocious Crime, they represent him as if he never had performed any good or laudable Action.

'Tis to this Principle alone, I can ascribe the Officiousness of News Writers,

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in scraping together Circumstances that have no relation to the Point in question; but which may have a Tendency to prejudice the Public against a Person, who, excepting his Perpetration of the late Crime, deserved their Approbation almost in every Respect, and even in that might perhaps, was he better known to them, appear an Object worthy of their Pity.

What Purpose could it serve to mention, that some Years ago one of the Name of *Stirn* was hanged? Did it make the present unhappy Youth either worse, or show that he was more deserving the Gallows? Or was it done with a View to persuade the Public that he was descended of a Family that produced nothing but Villains; and

that more than one of them has met with an ignominious End.*

Our Laws, indeed, never look upon a Person as guilty, till he has been convicted in open Court : But many of our Countrymen, and surely not the best of them, seem to anticipate Public Justice, or rather like Judge *Jefferies*, to hang without Trial.

In order therefore to disabuse the Public in such Particulars, as have been misrepresented, and to show my regard to Justice,

* Had it been mentioned that we have in our own Church a Person of the same Name, an Arch-Deacon and Canon of the Cathedral of *York*, that might perhaps have looked like Humanity, and might have softened some Features in this young Gentleman's Character ; but this would have counter-acted the Intention of the News Writer, which was not to pity but blacken, and to be guilty of the same Crime to *Stirn's* Character, that he had been guilty of to Mr. *Mathews* ; so that while he is inveighing against *Stirn* for murdering Mr. *Mathews*, he himself is guilty of murdering *Stirn's* Character.

Justice, and to the * Brother of the unfortunate Youth, who is revered by all his Countrymen, as a Person of great Piety, exemplary Life, and possessed of all the Qualities that can adorn one of the chief Places in the Church to which he belongs; I have published the following Narrative. Yet I must at the same Time premise that I have such a Detestation of the Crime Mr. *Stirn* has committed, that I would not be guilty of palliating or vindicating it for any Consideration.

Mr.

* The Writer of the genuine Account of Mr. *Stirn*, in the *Grand Magazine*, seems to have been in some Particulars very much misinformed. He says Mr. *Stirn's* Brother, according to Report, is Archbishop, and Metropolitan of *Hesse*; now the Gentleman should recollect that there is no Bishop in *Hesse*; and a Metropolitan in those Parts is only a Superintendant over the Clergy of a particular Province, formerly a Bishop's See—Again, this Authour seems to insinuate that Mr. *Stirn* had lived with some other Person before he was employed by me, the contrary of which is true; for I was the first Person with whom he lived as an Assistant after his coming over.

Mr. *Mathews* is represented as his Benefactor, as receiving him into his House after I had turned him out ; perhaps with a View to render his Crime more black ; and to make the World believe he had murdered his best Friend.

So far is this from being the Truth, that had it not been for Mr. *Mathews's* Instigations, it is probable he would not have left me ; but he frequently insinuating to Mr. *Stirn*, for whom I presume he had conceived a very good Opinion, that all my Protestations of Regard and Kindness towards him were only artful and hypocritical ; proceeding intirely from selfish Principles, being conscious that my very Bread depended upon his continuance with me ; that my real Intention was to make him my Slave, and so to keep him in a State of Poverty

ty and Dependance; and that it was in his Power to provide better for himself; by such Insinuations he induced him to behave in a Manner he had never done before, and by degrees almost alienated my Affections from him. So that it is evident that the Behaviour taken notice of by the *Magazine* Writer, was partly owing to Mr. *Mathews* himself.

As Mr. *Stirn* had many Qualifications that rendered his Character amiable; was a Person remarkable for his Temperateness; of nice Honour; detested the most distant Imputation of any Thing base, or vitious; was learned beyond his Years, and in short possessed, in a surprizing Degree, every Qualification that might adorn the Character of the Gentleman, he did not want attractives to render him

him agreeable to every one that had the Pleasure of his Acquaintance.

For the two Years he was with me, his Application to Business was generally steady; but when retired from it, his Behaviour was chequered.

No Man had more Tenderness; the Afflictions of the distressed not only melted him into Tears, but likewise engaged his Relief; which, generally, was beyond his Circumstances; for when he has had but Two Shillings in the World, he has given One to a Countryman who seemed to want it.

His Regard to Justice was so remarkable, that upon his receiving his Salary from me, and hearing of a young Gentleman going to *Bremen*, he recollected that
he

he owed Eight Shillings to a Person in that City, to whom he sent it with Interest, though at the same Time he was destitute of several Necessaries.

Though he had uncommon Parts for a person of his Years, yet they were balanced by some Foibles that seemed unbecoming a Person of sound Understanding.

Yet the Regard I had for his Family, and the Apprehension of his being exposed to some bad Consequences thereby, induced me to keep him in my own House much longer than I would have done, and to dissuade him from entering into that of the deceased.

I have already described him as having had very nice Sentiments of Honour

nour, and an inviolable Regard to Virtue; but the Authour of the *Genuine Account* *, page 414, accuses him of
 “ forming Designs against every Wo-
 “ man with whom he had any Op-
 “ portunity of an unrestrained Inter-
 “ course, adding that this appears he
 “ had been guilty of with Regard to
 “ Mrs. Cranford, whose Virtue he not
 “ only considered as possible to shake,
 “ but had even made some Attacks up-
 “ on, in such a Manner as greatly to
 “ alarm and terrify her.” This is cer-
 “ tainly

* I am not a little surprized to find that Authour as-
 serting, that upon a Quarrel in which after very high
 Words and Blows passing between us—I immediately
 discharged Mr. *Stirn* from the Post which he held
 under me. This is a Mistake, because he continued with
 me for Three Weeks afterwards, and when he left
 me I made an Offer to continue him in his Place up-
 on more advantageous Terms, than those which he
 had hitherto met with, telling him at the same Time
 that the Scheme he was upon would not meet with that
 Success which he imagined.

tainly a Misrepresentation, I could wish it were not a wilful one; for Mr. *Stirn* never made any *Attack* on Mrs. *Crawford's* Virtue, nor ever terrified her by any such Offer; he affrighted her certainly by a boisterous Behaviour, which I always looked on as an Infirmity not in his Power to controul,

The Liberties this Writer had taken with the Name and Character of Mrs. *Crawford* are not greater than his Mistake; and the Insinuation he gives that Mrs. *Mathews* was exposed to his Attacks likewise, and was also obliged to complain to her Husband is contrary to Truth, since he never make any such Attempt upon her, and she had no Grounds for Complaint on that Score; and never gave the most distant Hint that she had.

He likewise in his last Paragraph says, that a reciprocal Abuse passed between me and Mr. *Stirn* at Mr. *Pugh's*, which I look upon as making no less free with my Character than he has done with that of Mrs. *Crawford* before ; I can in my own Defence appeal to all my Acquaintance, who are ready to attest that I never was guilty of the low Vice of returning Railing for Railing, so opposite to my Character, as an Instructor of Youth ; and besides this, I positively deny that I ever had any Quarrel with Mr. *Stirn* in Mr. *Pugh's* House.

A Writer who sets out to inform the Public of Facts, should have been better informed before he began to write, than this Authour seems to have been, lest he should appear to have had no
other

other Intention but to spread Scandal, or a Design to pre-possess a Jury against a Criminal before his Trial.

To produce unattested Rumour for Fact in so tender a Point as this, wherein the Characters of several Persons, and the Life of another is concerned, betrays something that I do not choose to mention: Especially when it was in the Power of the Person to be better informed, as this Writer might have been, had he applied to me.

But a Murder was committed,---Mr. *Stirn* was the Perpetrator;--and consequently was to be stripped of every Virtue he possessed, in order to render him an Object of Detestation, instead of one of Pity, which he certainly is acknowledged to be by all that know him,
and

and would be to all that do not, if they were acquainted how much he deserves it.

The Character he has given of this unfortunate Youth carries with it so many Marks of Rancour, that it is hoped it will not be believed : Especially as, after living with him Two Years, I never found any Instances which could give Cause to any One to accuse him of the least Appearance of Vice, of any dishonest Practices, of any Marks of Licentiousness, of any Appearance of Diffimulation ; but on the Contrary the most inviolable Regard for Virtue, the highest Sentiments of Honour ; the strongest Detestation of every thing infamous ; a Temperance uncommon in a Youth of his Age, and such a Delicacy of Sentiment that he would look
on

on it as an unpardonable Crime to be capable of being guilty of what some of his Years would esteem as an Embellishment, and a finishing Stroke in the Character of a fine Gentleman and a Gallant.

The Connection between him and Mr. *Mathews* being misrepresented by all the Accounts that have appeared in the public Papers, and misunderstood by the Authour just quoted; it will not be improper to state it in its true Light. For it was not so much a Connection of disinterested Benevolence, as of private Interest.

The Terms on which he was to be at Mr. *Mathews's* were, that he should teach Mrs. *Mathews* and her Daughter Music, and Mr. *Mathews* himself the Classics. In Consideration of which he

was

was to have an Apartment ready furnished, and his Board, if he pleased to accept it. Mr. *Mathews* offered to secure him a Continuance for twelve Months in Writing, but Mr. *Stirn* refused it, saying he need not, for he would trust to his Honour.

As I knew Mr. *Stirn* to have particular Failings, I could not account for any otherwise, but by imputing them to *Insanity*; I dissuaded Mr. *Mathews* from taking him into his House on that Account; but he telling this unhappy Youth what I had said, provoked him to behave in a Manner inconsistent with a Person of his Sentiments, and genteel Education.

My Representations to Mr. *Stirn* not to accept of Mr. *Mathews* Invitation were on that Account in vain, and the ill Consequences

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sequences I predicted to both, had an Existence not long after their being together.

I have hitherto been only giving a faint Sketch of his Character till the 13th of this Month; and shall be minute in the Remainder, that the Reader may trace the Steps and Gradations by which he was lead to commit the Crime for which he is now confined.

On *Wednesday* the 13th of *August*, meeting Mr. *Stirn* at *Bartlet's-Buildings* Coffee-House, he, with great Emotion, told me that the late Mr. *Mathews* had most villainously and unjustly charged him with having alienated his Wife's Affection from him, and in virtue of it had, he made no doubt, access to his Purse, which he assigned as one Cause of his imputing that Crime to him; but Mr. *Stirn* added, that he had never of-

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ferred

ferred the least Indecency to Mrs. *Mathews*, nor had he any Cause whatever to believe that if he had, she would have countenanced him. He added, he firmly believed her to be a Gentlewoman of Virtue, and heartily lamented her Unhappiness in being joined to a Person so unworthy of her.

Having Knowledge and Experience enough of the World to know how easily the domestic Peace of Families is disturbed by Jealousy, I immediately desired him to consider the Consequence of such Suspicions, whether well or ill-founded, and advised him to go to Mr. *Mathews* to convince him of his Mistake; and, in order to render him easy for the future, to tell him that he would quit his House, and never enter into it again without his Invitation.

Upon

Upon my thus expressing myself, he immediately started from his Seat, rolling his Eyes like a Madman, and with all the Signs of Fury painted upon his Countenance, told me if I spoke another Word, "he would——" muttering something to himself.—And on my asking him, What? he answered, "suspect that I and Mr. Chapman had, in Conjunction with Mr. *Mathews* long since entered into a Combination to ruin his Character, and so to oblige him to quit England with Ignominy and Disgrace."

Telling him then that I always thought one Part of Friendship consisted in speaking my Mind freely and without fear; and whether he would be advised or no, or whatever might be

the Consequence, I was resolved never to countenance him in his Follies.

Upon this he sat down, and appeared somewhat easy, but, on a sudden, started, and told me his Honour was wounded, his Character altogether ruined, his Bread lost, and under such Circumstances *he could not live*; and would, if scandalously turned out, be revenged.

As I found it in vain to expostulate with him any longer, I accompanied him to Mr. *Mathews's* Door where I parted from him, and left him, as I thought, in a Temper to do as I advised him.

But on his Entrance, about Eleven o'Clock, he found his Cloaths, &c. in the Passage, and a Constable, whom Mr. *Mathews* had called in to force him out of his House, which was effected after loading him

him with many severe Reflections and by telling him he lived by *spunging upon others*.

Next Day Mr. *Chapman*, a particular Friend of Mr. *Stirn's*, called at my House in order to desire me to meet him and Mr. *Mathews* that Evening, in order, if possible, to bring about a Reconciliation. But Mr. *Mathews* being from Home this salutary Design was unfortunately rendered abortive.

On *Friday* Morning, hearing that Mr. *Stirn* was in great Anxiety, and Distress of Mind, in order to console him and convince him of my Good-will, I sent him an Invitation to dine with me; he consented, and came according to his Promise, behaving himself with the greatest Politeness, till after the Cloth was taken away; at which Time rising
from

from Table, and without any Cause given, he uttered several Invectives against the Deceased, saying, no one but an execrable V--ll--n could impute to him the horrid Character of a Thief and Adulterer.

This was pronounced in so abrupt a Manner, that a very sensible Clergyman, who supplies Mr. *Stirn's* Place in my School, could not help telling me, on my going up Stairs, that Mr. *Stirn* was, as I had often intimated, disordered in his Senses.

At half an Hour after Five, as I was going down *Cross-street*, Mr. *Stirn* overtook me, and as I observed him look with an Air of Dispondency, I could not help suspecting that he had some Design to destroy himself; having heard that he had made an Attempt of that Kind last *Christmas*.

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The Conversation that passed between us, turned principally upon the Topic of Honour, and the most proper Means of maintaining it.

As I observed him frequently start, look wildly, and saw his Colour change, I turned my Discourse to Religion; representing the Necessity of forgiving Offences: Adding besides, that it was more honourable to contemn an Injury than to resent it; and that it was more generous to pardon the greatest Offences, than peevishly to quarrel on any petty Occasion, and make Men fear our Passion, hate our Humours, and abhor our Society.

Upon observing that Mr. *Stirn* seemed to pay no Regard to what I said, and that

that he rather grew wilder than otherwise, I changed my Discourse to that of the Prospect he had of doing well, upon which he hastily interrupted me, "Who will entertain a Person under the horrid Character of an Adulterer and a Thief, &c." No, Sir, "I am lost to God, and to the World: My Honour, which is to me more sacred than Loss of itself, is wounded so as not to be recovered; ---- My Enemies will triumph in my Disgrace, --- I have abandoned my God, and he has forsaken me." -----

The Conversation that passed afterwards is not to be expressed: However, I told him the Consciousness of his own Innocence ought to comfort him; and as to Mr. *Mathews*, the Disgrace would fall on his own Head. That if he should
fail

fail of Success here, I would assist him with Money to return to his Brother, and would give him a Character by no Means unfavourable.

I had no sooner mentioned his Brother to him, but he started, and with great Emotion replied, that neither his Brother or Country would receive him, when blackened with the Imputation of such Crimes as he then laboured under; and immediately burst into Tears, which had such an Effect upon me, that I desired we might part, as I could bear it no longer; accordingly I left him.

After walking in the Fields till eight o'Clock, and thinking on what had passed between me and Mr. *Stirn*, I could not help suspecting that he might be tempted to destroy himself, and therefore endeavoured to find him out.

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About

About half an Hour after eight, I met with him at *Owen's Coffee-house*, where he entered into a Conversation with me pretty coolly, upon the Subject of the Quarrel between him and Mr. *Mathews*, often starting and saying, he expected every Person that opened the Door to be him.

While I was with him, he called for some Potatoes, and a Pint of Porter; which he devoured ravenously, though he had supped before, and as I since understand, drank three * Gills of Wine, and a Pint of Porter.

After this he got up and said he would go to Mr. *Pugh's*; and upon my endeavouring to persuade him to go to his Lodgings

* This was a sufficient Quantity to deprive him of his Reason; as is evident from his remarkable Temperance.

Lodgings, he caught me by the Hand, and almost squeezed the Blood out of my Fingers Ends.

When we came to Mr. *Pugh's* Door I left him, and went into my own House; but upon hearing that Mr. *Chapman* was at the *Pewter Platter*, and imagining that Mr. *Mathews* and Mr. *Lowther* might be there likewise, I went in with an Intention to prevent Mr. *Stirn* from being guilty of any Irregularity; and, if possible, to bring about a Reconciliation.

On my Entrance, I found him with his Eyes rolling about wildly, and looking exceedingly furious, upon which I whispered Mr. *Mathews*, and besought him for God's Sake to drink Mr. *Stirn's* Health, as the only Way to render him calm: He told me he would, and I believe intended it, had not Mr. *Stirn*,

after being called out by Mr. *Chapman*, who perceived his Disorder, and endeavoured to pacify him, begun to recapitulate some Particulars, which stirred up Mr. *Mathews's* Resentment so as to call him a Scoundrel, and bid him return to his lousy Countrymen; this Language being seconded by several of the Company, who cried out, --- you are mad! --- you are mad! and ought to be confined; he was raised to such a Pitch of Fury, that getting between me and Mr. *Lowther*, who sat at Mr. *Mathews's* left Elbow, he drew out two Pistols, and discharged them * almost at the same Instant, one of which finished the Life of the unfortunate Mr. *Mathews*, and without his ever speaking one Word; the other was aimed at himself.

What

* These I since find he had prepared to fight Mr. *Mathews* with, having it seems given him a Challenge for that Purpose.

What Mr. *Stirn* said afterwards, or how he behaved, I am a Stranger to, having, upon seeing him secured, immediately quitted the Room.

Thus have I impartially represented the several Stages, which led this unfortunate young Man to commit an Action every one must consider with Horror; not with a Design to extenuate his Guilt, but to remove the Prejudices which the Public have entertained of his being more wicked than he really is.

When we consider the Situation of this young Man, thus deprived of his Character, and as he thought of every Means of Subsistence; of every Thing that could recommend him to the Pity of those who believed Mr. *Mathews's* Accusation, which he himself acknowledged to be
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groundless, just before his unfortunate Catastrophe; if we consider him as having nice Sentiments of Honour; and looking on the Imputation of any Baseness as the greatest Affront that could be giving him: If we consider the Manner of his Education, wherein he was taught, that the putting up an Affront calmly is a Sign of Cowardice, and a Mark of indelible Infamy: If we likewise consider the high Sentiments he might possibly entertain of his own supposed Dignity, from the Superiority of his Talents above others; and if we consider him in a strange Country, at a Distance from Friends to vindicate his Character; deprived of every flattering Prospect, which the Deceased had imprudently, though good-naturedly fed in his Expectation; his Youth, his Inexperience; his Ignorance of Mankind; and his Unacquaintance

tance with the Laws of this Kingdom; the Frailty of human Nature, and that Impetuosity which hurried him to such Extravagancies that I know not any proper Name for; the State of his Mind not under the Guidance of Reason, and exasperated by Provocations, I must say that he deserves Pity, in as much, as though he has been guilty of one most horrid Crime, and has been the Sport of one Failing, yet it must be owned, that he has a thousand Excellencies, that few of his Years can boast of, and which would render any Person an Object of Esteem, if not of Admiration.

It is to be hoped that the Youth of this Nation will learn by his Fall that brilliant Parts, false Principles of Honour, or a specious Love of Virtue for its own Amiableness, are not sufficient without
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the Assistance of Revealed Religion, to enable a Person to withstand the innumerable Temptations, to which human Nature is continually exposed.

In Confirmation of this solemn Truth, I cannot conclude better, than by giving the Sense of the Letter, which appeared in the *Gazetteer*, from this unhappy Youth, which he introduces to this Effect. *

To the *Publisher* of the GAZETTEER.

S I R,

BE so kind as to favour this Letter with a Place in your Paper; the Design of which is to do Honour to God; to caution Free-thinkers, and to refute a
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* The Sense I have put on this Letter is authorised by Mr. *Stirn's* own Consent, and published with his Approbation, who being a Stranger to our Language, may be supposed not capable of expressing his Sentiments in such a Manner, as to convey them properly to an *English* Reader.

Report of my having carried on a private Correspondence with the Lady it is directed to.

I am, Sir, Yours, &c.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Dear Madam,

EXCUSE this soft Address, that is in calling you *dear Madam*, from one eternally debarred from giving you any farther Trouble. Accept this Letter which is the *first*, and will be the last that you will receive from a justly fettered Criminal.

Your Husband's Death, which was both unexpected, and unprepared for; the Terrours this Catastrophe must have occasioned to you; the Change it has made in the Fortunes of his innocent and helpless Orphans, nay, his Patients, Friends, and Relations call aloud for Satisfaction;

tion; which it is not in my Power to make; and for which my Death will be no Recompence.

I neglected the Opportunity of preventing this Crime, and have now no other Prospect, but the Impossibility of escaping the Misery and Ignominy of a public Death.

Let not the World any longer entertain any Suspensions of your Conduct, or the Foibles of your Husband, as having involved me in this inextricable Labyrinth. No, Madam, you are both innocent of my present Fate. But the real Cause I would have proclaimed to the World; my Sins; my Presumption; my Neglect of GOD and his Ordinances; my Lukewarmness, that lazy epidemic Sin, interwoven in our Natures, have brought me to this Calamity. The

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ALMIGHTY permitted me to fill up the Measure of my cool and deliberate Iniquities by suffering me to plunge into this atrocious Crime. When I had provoked his Anger it left me to myself, the greatest Punishment it could inflict. The only Guide I trusted in for the last Year was Reason; this I substituted instead of Revelation, and thought it sufficient to lead me to the Practice of every moral Duty. But, alas! how blind, how weak was my erring and stumbling Guide! Abandoned to the reigning Passion of my Mind, I was the Slave of Ambition; resented, when affronted; thought this consistent with Reason and Prudence; so ran, and rush'd, and---fell!

This, Madam, is the Source from whence arose my Offence to GOD, to you, to your Orphans, and to your Nation.

This

This was the fatal Rock which split my brittle ship; this the Scythe which cuts me off in the Flower of Age.

Pardon, Madam, pardon the Instrument of your present Distress; whom GOD, I hope, will pardon. Let his Fate draw pity even from you.

He laments his past Life; detests the sin and desperately wicked Act, for which he now stands accused. Your Sorrow is indeed great, but my present Sufferings are inexpressibly greater, not from the fear of Death, the Consequence of this horrible Crime, but from a consciousness of never having it in my Power to make a Retaliation to you and to my own Family, whose Sorrows will be equal to those of him, who shortly will fall a Sacrifice to public Justice.

FINIS.

